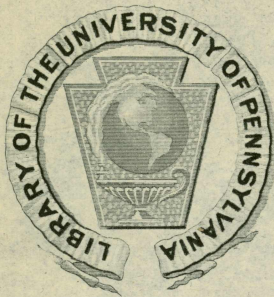


Origins of the
European war...

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The Origin of the European War

The responsibility of Germany

On the 19th of July last, Mr. Haase spoke as follows to his fellow-members of the Reichstag: "It is impossible to endorse what has been said about the origin of the war in the face of history. We here refuse to make declarations contrary to historical truth. This applies to the very superficial declaration which the new Chancellor has just made on this point in history.

"We do not forget Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, nor Austria's military preparations against Russia, nor the deliberations which took place here at Berlin in July, 1914, nor Messrs. Tirpitz's and Falkenhayn's activity during those critical day."

Since the socialist member's remarks neither provoked a retort nor a denial from the government, the facts must be such. What it had been impossible to understand so far: the obstinacy of the allied enemy-powers to refuse peace-negotiations, now becomes clear. They not only do not wish to negotiate with a government but with a *form* of government which has maintained falsehoods for three years without respite.

This government lied when it declared that it was ignorant of Austria's intentions and that it had in no way participated in the compilation of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. Now, on July 5th, the whole matter was settled and the Emperor, though supposed to be on holidays in Norway, telegraphed to Vienna incessantly between the 10th and the 22nd of July. The government lied when it declared that it had made every effort to stop Austria's rush to war. It never made the slightest decisive sign to express that wish; the German ambassador at Vienna, Mr. de Tshirsky, was given a free hand to act as he liked and what he wanted was war with Russia, and he contributed personally to the compilation of the ultimatum to Serbia.

To all plans of mediation, understanding and arrangement Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg and Herr von Jagow have constantly answered that such and such a detail of form prevented their acceptance.

Thus the day was reached when Austria declared war on Serbia, that is, July 28th. On the next day, July 29th, the Tsar telegraphed to the Emperor proposing the mediation which might have

this Supreme Court having been precisely created for the protection of sovereign *amour-propre* and to permit these and those to accept a verdict without appearing to yield to foreign pressure: The Emperor did not reply to the generous proposal and, realising he could never make the German people understand the reason for this unpardonable refusal, he ordered the suppression of this telegram from the diplomatic file at the Chancelry.

This suppression is a most terrible confession of guilt. If William II paid no heed to the Tsar's suggestion it was because he had, that afternoon at Potsdam, signed the order of mobilisation and that he considered it was too late. His military advisers had given him to understand that the army,— glory and foundation-stone of the House of Prussia, — desired war, was sure of victory and that his son, the Kronprinz, would take his place in the affections of the army if the decree were not immediately signed. The decision once taken he could not go back on it. The chief remaining consideration was to try and put the wrongs on the side of the adversaries. Austria having declared war on Serbia and having, moreover, mobilised two army corps on the Russian frontier of Galicia, the Russian government, which could not accept the annihilation pure and simple of Serbia and wished to negotiate with Austro-Hungary on an equal footing of preparation, also mobilised in those parts of the country nearest Austria. Count Berchtold, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Austro-Hungary, while having some misgivings, declared that he understood it and conversation would not be interrupted.

Until then the whole of Austrian and German diplomacy had consisted in presenting Austria's declaration of war to Serbia as a question concerning no one who intended giving assistance to Serbia. Now everyone knew that historically, morally, ethnically, economically, Russia was Serbia's protector and that she could not be an indifferent onlooker in the crushing of Serbia by Austria.

By declaring war on Serbia and by firing at once on Belgrade, the Austro-Hungarian government, encouraged thereto by Mr. de Tschirsky and confident in the entire support of Germany, knew perfectly well that a Russian intervention would occur. The Wilhelmstrasse and Ballplatz feigned surprise and said to London and Paris: "If you are friends of peace use your influence on Russia to induce her to sheathe her sword, tell her that if war breaks out between Austria and her you will forsake her." And so London and Paris answered: "It would appear that you might yourself begin to show your love of peace by giving evidence of it; Austria might declare that she will restrict herself to the occupation of Belgrade and the frontier territories as pledge until she obtains satisfaction from Serbia. They might tell Vienna that they will withdraw her support if Austria's demands go too far." Aus-

tria had the intention of continuing on her adventure and Germany maintained that it was impossible for her to exercise any pressure on Vienna. Why, therefore, ask of others what you are not ready to do yourself? Could France and England follow at Saint Petersburg a line favourable to the Austro-German policy, that is to say, advise Russia to forsake Serbia to annihilation and to renounce her historical rôle of protector of the Slavs in the Balkans? This demand on the Chancellor's and Herr von Jagow's part could not be satisfied. Russia would thereby have abdicated from her position as a European power and the Triple Entente would have been broken up. This was, perhaps, the diplomatic dream cherished at the Wilhelmstrasse and the strategy was far-reaching. But, seeing that the diplomatic tactics were not as successful as it had been hoped, the Prussian government ought to have accepted one of the schemes for mediation which was, after all, a great triumph for Austria and Germany, since the powers of the Entente had gone so far as to recognise Austria's right to occupy Belgrade and part of Serbia pending that the Serbian government had given complete satisfaction to Austria. This humiliation for Serbia would have given Austria definite prestige in the Balkans and have made a deep impression in the Slavonic provinces of the dualist empire.

The Desire for War

Austria and the Prussian government had bigger ambitions. They wanted, either a gigantic diplomatic triumph, or war. The first hypothesis having being fruitless, war remained. Whatever be the power of an absolute ruler, whatever might be the certainty of victory held by the head-staffs, war cannot be, during the 20th century, declared after the practice of tribal chiefs in the past. Explanations and of valid reasons are necessary, for the moral reputation of a whole nation cannot be gambled with on the simple pronouncement of a decree due to a whim.

It has already been said that Austria had declared war on Serbia and mobilised in Galicia opposite the Russian frontier, that Russia had responded by mobilisation in the Southern districts opposite Austria and that Count Berchtold had accepted this state of affairs without considering it a *casus belli*. Conversation would, therefore, be pursued. Now, suddenly, on July 29th, Count de Pourtales, the German ambassador at St Petersburg declares, according to government orders and in a peremptory tone, that Germany will mobilise if Russia does not give up her partial mobilisation in the four Southern districts. The German government, therefore, spoke more radically on Austria's behalf than Austria spoke for herself, and put Russia in a position without any

choice other than abdication, for to demobilise the four districts on the Austrian frontier was to confess to giving up the intention to defend, in any manner whatsoever, Serbian interests and to leave Austria free to crush Serbia. It was the only thing Russia could not do. In what was the government of Prussia, which affected such solicitude for the maintenance of peace, in what was it meddling, seeing that it had declared its impossibility to make the slightest remark to Vienna, so jealous was the Austrian court to keep its freedom of action and that the slightest piece of advice would do more harm than good? It was this same Prussian government which had, through the agency of its ambassador, expressed the threat, so big in consequences, to Russia. The government at St Petersburg had understood. Germany wanted war and the only thing left to do was to prepare it, since it was impossible to yield to her injunction and demobilise the four Southern districts. Russia mobilised. That was what Berlin was waiting for to cry to the four quarters of the globe: " Russia mobilised first; she is the guilty one! " Be so good as to re-read the fore-going lines. If Russia had not demobilised the four Southern districts as she had been asked to at Berlin, what would Germany have done? According to the threat pronounced by Count de Pourtalès, she should have decreed her general mobilisation. Why did she not wait? Firstly, because German tactics were so patent that no one could be deceived by them and that it was no longer worth while to believe in the impossible; secondly, because Russian mobilisation was so slow, its concentration exacting two months, owing to the limited number of rail-roads and the extent of her territory, that it was not possible to wait indefinitely; finally, because in the Tsar's mind, mobilisation did not necessarily mean war but, simply, preparation in view of events, especially since information received from Germany showed that, though she had not mobilised officially, she already disposed of formidable organisation; finally, because Austria had been the first to decree general mobilisation.

The Austrian Mobilisation

When studying the causes of the European war, only Russia, England, France and Germany are mentioned, Austria being left more or less in the shade. It is forgotten that, of all the powers, Austria was the first to mobilise, that she mobilised before Russia and that she did not do so without the formal assent of her German ally.

When, therefore, Germany, supposed pacific, presented an ultimatum to Russia on July 31st, enjoining her to demobilise in the twelve hours, under menace of war, it was she who let loose the world-cataclysm.

Russia did not want war, she simply wished to protect the Slavonic interests in the Balkans and obtain moderation from Austria. Austria, supported by Germany, not having wished to hear, having declared war on Serbia, having commenced hostilities and mobilised several army-corps in Galicia, Russia considered that conversation was impossible with one of the interlocutors armed and the other not. In the American Far West, when two miners have a difference to settle and are both of fighting temper, they begin by putting their revolvers on the table before them; when this has been done they order drinks and begin to talk in a friendly way. Were one of them unarmed conversation could not be pursued on equal terms. Supposing a third, a friend of one of the two, were to make his appearance on the scene and demand of the other to put his revolver in his pocket, while demanding the right for himself and his friend to remain armed, the thing would appear, at the least, strange for a pacific proceeding. Germany acted liked this third arrival.

Why did not Russia wait for Germany to mobilise first? Because the craftiness of the Wilhelmstrasse had managed things well. Firstly, by publishing, on July 30th, through the *Local Anzeiger*, the *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten*, the *Deutsche Zeitung*, the *Deutsche Nachrichten* and the *Deutsche Warte* the news, contradicted two hours later, of the German mobilisation. It was obvious that the Russian ambassador in Berlin would communicate the information to his government, which he did of course at once, as might be expected. When the St Petersburg government received the news on July 30th after having been officially advised by Count de Pourtalès, the German ambassador, that Germany would mobilise if Russia did not demobilise the Southern districts, a proceeding to which reply had been made that this demobilisation was impossible, the government of St Petersburg could entertain no doubts as to the verisimilitude of the facts. Everything concorded. After his conversation with Mr. Sazonoff, Count de Pourtalès had been obliged to telegraph to Berlin Russia's refusal to demobilise the four Southern districts: the general German mobilisation was the quite natural consequence. When Mr. Swerbew, Russian Ambassador at Berlin, telegraphed the denial which Mr. de Jagow had just telephoned to him, this telegram, whose time of arrival at St Petersburg has never been known, could change nothing, since Count de Pourtalès had been explicit: "If you do not demobilise the Southern districts", he had said, "Germany will mobilise". Contradicted at two in the afternoon the news might have been true a few hours later. It was no more a question of facts but a question of hours and, from the Tsar's point of view, it was not a matter of capital importance to be able to say: « You mobilised at 4.45 and I only at 4.55. » Officially, solemnly, Germany had ordered her ambassador to say: "If Russia does not demobilise her

four Southern districts Germany will mobilise." Between great power and at times so tragic in the world's history, ambassadors are not like nurses who frighten children by threatening them with the policeman, though the policeman is not sent for even if baby is naughty. Their words are grave, minutely weighed. Each word, each adjective has its value. The German threat of mobilisation was formal and could not be revoked. Even if Mr. Swerbew had not telegraphed the premature news of German mobilisation the Russian government could not take comfort in the supposition that Mr. de Pourtaès had thrown out a threat on chance. The German mobilisation had become a mathematical certainty. But one hope remained: The Hague court of arbitration. The Tsar had ventured it already on the evening of the 29th receiving but a negative telegram from William II which telegram must have reached St Petersburg towards two o'clock on the morning of the 30th of July. There only remained to mobilise. The great triumph of the Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg: "Russia mobilised before we did" is poor cavilling in the light of the foregoing fact; it is but a childish game at hide-and-seek.

The German Mobilisation

Moreover, even on this footing, Germany cannot plead innocence. The news of the Russian mobilisation was only known in Berlin on July 31st at 2 p.m. Now at twelve o'clock the Emperor had pronounced the *Kriegsgefahrzustand* which, in German organisation, is the first stage in mobilisation, each reservist showing on his mobilisation paper, side by side, the two terms: *Kriegszustand* and *Mobilmachung* while he must present himself under the colours as soon as *Kriegszustand* has been proclaimed, or only at the time of mobilisation according to whether one of the two terms has been struck out. Even if the recruiting clerks had struck out the word *Mobilmachung* leaving only *Kriegszustand* the whole of the German army might have been on a war-footing without there having been any need to give the general mobilisation-order.

If we now approach the question of the war's outbreak we are obliged to recognise that Germany declared war on Russia and on France. She declared war on Russia because the latter had not obeyed the ultimatum and had not given the order of demobilisation within twelve hours. Since all German military authorities have observed that nothing could have been slower than the Russian mobilisation it is difficult to understand why Germany, if she had no aggressive designs and a plan of sudden assault, why she did not wait a few days to allow time for some kind of mediation to occur. The Russian mobilisation was the

one offering the least danger of all and the Tsar had, moreover, formally declared that it had no aggressive character while being a simple measure of precaution to put himself on a footing of equality during diplomatic transactions. Germany declared war on Russia with surprising speed because her plan of attack demanded this hastening of matters. This was, moreover, admitted by Mr. de Jagow to the British ambassador in a moment of confidence provoked by the disturbance caused by England's declaration of war (British Blue Book No 60).

The German Plan

The idea of the German head-staff, then master of the situation, was as follows: war must be declared without delay on Russia and France, all the strength must be brought to bear on France, she having been crushed in two months then Russia, whose very slow mobilisation will only be ready at that time, must be dealt with. There is no doubt that every hypothesis had been examined at Berlin. The question must have been put as to what would happen if, contrary to prognostics based on alliances, France had not *at once* fulfilled her part as Russia's ally? What would have occurred if Germany, receiving no declaration of war from France, had had to wait for French intervention? No doubt Germany would have had the better part of a power attacked for no other reason than reasons of diplomatic alliances, but this point of honour was indifferent to her. The preventive attack seemed far more useful to her. Time must not be left to France to mobilise normally; she had to be hit treacherously from behind by crossing neutral Belgium which everyone had solemnly agreed to respect. The French forts and an honest fight had to be avoided. The German army, which considered itself the most formidable in the world, of which William II had himself said that in comparison the armies of Napoleon had been non-existent, still had to resort to felony to ensure success. And that is why, war having been declared on Russia, Germany declared war on France, giving excuses which are to the shame of German diplomacy, since they are but a tissue of lies, which have all been contradicted, from the French aeroplane at Wesel, those above the Eifel, and the one at Karlsruhe to the one at Nurnberg. Each word was a lie received by the Wolff press agency from Headquarters and which Herr von Schoen, acting on orders from the Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, had to advance to the French government as the reason for declaring war on France.

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The Aggression Against France

France was guilty of none of these assaults. Her whole policy consisted in furnishing no excuse, of whatever nature, for a declaration of war on Germany. She had even withdrawn her troops ten kilometres behind the frontier to avoid the slightest incident. The reason is not difficult to conjecture: England, to whom France had appealed, had made it clearly understood that she would only take part in case of a marked aggression from Germany and that she had no intention of being entangled in a war where France was the aggressor whatever the diplomatic reason might be to drive her thereto.

The German head-staff, which might have put France in the most cruelly embarrassing position by not attacking her and obliging her government to obtain the Chamber's vote for a war founded simply on the obligations in the Russian alliance, had not the necessary patience. Like birds of prey the generals of William II wanted war at once, brutal and ferocious, with the descent upon Paris and the crushing of France. They did not even wait that Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg had concocted a declaration of war in due form, however mendacious and absurd it might be. They immediately gave the troops the order to march and so it was that before the declaration of war it could be ascertained that German patrols had crossed the French frontier twenty-nine times; that Zeppelins had made nine incursions above French soil and that a French town, Lunéville, had been bombed by a German aeroplane. At the time Mr. de Schoen was handing Germany's declaration of war to M. Viviani, the French had already killed six German soldiers on French territory, two of whom were officers, and captured eight. These are facts the German government cannot deny.

Germany had assumed this terrible responsibility with a light heart since she was convinced of obtaining a brilliant victory which would render futile the historian's future protests. Facts have not conformed to these anticipations. The formidable power of the German army has given way before the goal has been reached. Now Berlin would rather not discuss the past and prefer to turn the world's attention on to other topics, but who have been the victims of German aggression cannot forget so easily and as the German peoples, from the Junkers to the majority-socialists, adhere faithfully to the Prussian government, which carries the responsibility of the greatest crime ever committed against humanity, no prospect of peace may be considered until that government has been put an end to.

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